

TOTALLY INDYPENDENT

Newsletter of Haringey Solidarity Group

www.haringey.org.uk

"We are not in the least afraid of ruins. We are going to inherit the earth, there is not the slightest doubt about that" - Buenaventura Durruti

STARTING TO DREAM

The St Ann's Redevelopment Trust (StART) is a group of local people who have come together to try and buy the St Ann's hospital site. Rather than a dodgy commercial developer getting it and building luxury flats we can't afford, StART want the community to be in control of the land and build homes we need; homes that are affordable to ordinary Haringey residents like you and me.

If a developer gets hold of the land, it will mean more gentrification and social cleansing. If StART get it, the community will decide what the site looks like, what houses are built, how much rents will be and who lives there. We want to build 800 truly affordable homes, plus sheltered and supported housing, with community buildings on-site and to keep large amounts of green space intact. A big developer will do none of this.

StART are trying to convince the Greater London Assembly (the mayor's office) to buy the land and then work with StART. We are also trying to convince the local authority that StART, as a community group, is the only viable option for getting truly affordable, secure, and good quality housing on the site.

There is still a long way to go and a huge amount of work needed but if StART achieve this, they will be one of the first examples in London of local people not just stopping a large developer but also coming up with their own plans to build genuinely affordable homes.



This won't stop the social people doing different bits from cleansing that is going on in running street stalls, to fund raising, Haringey and elsewhere in London but it will show others that we can take land back from big developers. There are a number of other groups around London doing the same thing. Together we can take back land and demonstrate that there is another way to house people. A way where ordinary people are in control and make the decisions that affect them.

It's a huge project but we have tried to break it down into manageable bits, so that anybody can get involved. We have many

people doing different bits from running street stalls, to fund raising, to looking at environmental features we want. We also have a group encouraging involvement from the wider community. There is a bit of work that needs doing with your name on it, so we would love you to get involved.

For more information check out our website or send us an email:

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IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE KURDISH FIGHTERS YPG/YPJ AGAINST IS, FUNDAMENTALISM & PATRIARCHY



ROJAVA: WHAT NEXT?

The movement of Rojava has brought hope and inspiration to many leftists, socialists and anarchists. It didn't aim to create religious, nationalist or liberal power. It empowered people, showing that they can rule themselves through direct democracy, without government, bringing new models of organising and building many different groups.

The Tev-Dem (Movement for a Democratic Society) is an umbrella of these groups, including communes. It is the heart and soul of the movement. The Tev-Dem has promoted the idea of feminism and to a certain extent

anarchism too. Women are encouraged to participate in all aspects of society, even the battlefield, where they have proved to be effective combatants in the war against Isis.

The movement has managed to build a society, setting up an example of equitable coexistence in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious region. People there enjoy their normal rights and take part in self-administrations and participate in local groups and the Tev Dem.

Non-Kurdish people have the same rights as the Kurdish, sharing power in the administrations whether civil or

military. The Peoples Protection Unit and Women's Protection Unit (YPG/YPJ) from very beginning defended them from the attacks of the terrorist groups, making themselves attractive to young Arabs and other ethnic minorities, many of whom joined them.

In Oct 2015 the Syrian Democratic Force (SDF) was set up consisting of YPG/YPJ, and Arab and Christian militias.

Rojava's movement, advocating social revolution from the bottom up, achieved many things; building local groups, liberating women and liberating religion to make it a personal issue. They protected the land, and people's property, from regime and terrorist attacks while rejecting the nation state and issuing a Social Contract.

In the Social Contract there are many decrees. A few are extremely important including: enshrining women's and children's rights; banning child marriages, female circumcision and polygamy; and freedom, equality and non-discrimination for all.

However, since Kobane's victory over Isis in Jan 2015 the situation in Rojava has changed. Syria has become the battle ground of US and Western countries on one side and Russia, Iran, Syria on the other side.

This raises some matters for concern:

1. The US now is a major ally to SDF, supporting and providing weapons. The agreement between them is not clear, but we know that US interest comes first in supporting any forces or government.

2. The PKK and the Democratic Union Party (PYD), two major hierarchical political parties, have too much power in making the major decisions, like expanding its territory by spreading the war, fighting Isis in non-Kurdish land. They are also too close to the US, and make decisions without consent, undermining the power of the Tev-dem.

3. Rojava is still facing the threat from Turkey and Syria while the fighting with Isis militarily look like to finish soon.

What the future holds for the people of Rojava is uncertain. One thing we know is that the emerging society there may not be allowed to flourish let alone become a socialist/anarchist society.

CATALONIA: AN ANARCHIST VIEWPOINT

The Catalan referendum has raised many questions for the region's anarchists. While some support independence, and others oppose it, all agree that the point is not to help build a new state, but rather to demonstrate through practice that self-organization, networks of mutual aid, and assemblies are the real alternative to the Spanish state.

What is clear is that the struggle against statist hierarchies is not on its way out: it will simply continue in a different form. If a Catalan state comes to exist, we will maintain our opposition to that state from the very same networks with our own practices, our own communities and our own economies of mutual aid.

We must learn about what happened in the past, when anarchists were betrayed. We should try to make sure that does not happen again, which is to say, we should foment a

consensus among anarchists and anti-authoritarians for when this situation is over, and continue building self-organization.

Anarchism is not a dogma, neither is it a religion. It is a form of life, a way of feeling and acting as a human in harmony with each other and the earth. Those who believe in the state have betrayed us before, but without us, they won't change either! We will continue influencing society in spite of them.

The anarcho-independentista current is criticized by some comrades who are more "orthodox" (or dogmatic, depending on how you see them). There are some who support the idea of independence without a state. It's not a majoritarian position, but it's a valid one. Anarchists have never really focused much attention on the subject of independence. But this issue has served to inspire debate and discussion; although we disagree with each other, we try to come to some consensus.

I don't know if we ought to vote or not, but I do know that the Spanish government is getting more fascist by the day. I am against any government that approves of the slogan "better bloody than broken" – originally referring to the Iberian peninsula – which shows that this debate is already centuries old.

My enemy continues to be capitalism, the military, the clergy, the farcical politicians and bankers. Anarchists don't stop being anarchists just because they express solidarity with people facing retaliation from the state. I know perfectly well what happened in 1937 and that we must not abandon our memory of the previous times we were betrayed by statists. But we also must oppose current state repression—or else will we simply stay put, watching?

Our struggle is to be present in the streets to offer our vision and denounce the violence of the state, whether it be Spanish, Catalan, or Chinese!

LABOUR'S RIGHTWARD SHIFT

Those of us who spent June 8th feeling warm and fuzzy about a new era of socialist possibility under Jeremy Corbyn have been perplexed about some of the announcements coming out of the left of the Labour Party.

On election night, Corbyn's critics, by and large, were outflanked and fell into line behind his leadership. But since then something strange has happened.

The Tories have waded from scandal to scandal - from their handling of the Grenfell Disaster to lying over student visas. There was a clear opportunity to for a genuinely radical Labour Party, buoyed by electoral success, to seize the agenda.

But for all the back-slapping and triumphalism of the recent Labour Party Conference, the agenda of Corbynism is very timid.

While his conference speech pledged to scrap the public sector pay cap, Labour are still offering public sector workers below-inflation pay-rises - Corbyn didn't mention that he's still planning to cut

everyone's pay!

And while much was made of the radicalism of Corbyn's promise to "control rents", in practice, a policy to "prevent unreasonable rent increases in between contracts" is exactly the same as the one that Labour promised under Miliband in 2015.

Corbyn and his allies have been almost completely silent on the brutal and possibly illegal anti-immigration policies of the Tories - depriving migrants of access to healthcare and housing - and of the policy of deporting rough sleepers, whether they have the right to be in the country or not.

Momentum - before the election viewed by many as insurgent within the Labour Party, instead of holding the leadership to account, has been more focused on entrenching their own leaders in the Labour Party bureaucracy.

When the party establishment was hostile to Corbyn, the Labour left needed to promote radical policies to keep the grassroots onside. That led to June's

relatively radical manifesto and inspired thousands of young activists onto the streets to campaign for the party.

But now Corbyn has won the support of his critics within the party, his position depends on him keeping them sweet. To be a PM-in-waiting, rather than a "loony-left" figurehead, he needs the goodwill of the media, the right of the party and lobbyists. They're the ones who will decide if Corbyn will enter Downing Street, or if the right-wing of the party returns to open rebellion.

The campaign by the Labour grassroots left to take over the party has been a victim of its own short-sightedness. Because it seeks to change the leadership of a top-down institution, rather than to build power from the bottom up, all it can ever do is produce a new set of bosses. And while the Labour left and leaders of Momentum have now secured positions of power in the party, the grassroots' goal of a genuinely radical Labour Party is as remote as ever.

As Orwell almost wrote in *Animal Farm*, you can look from pig to man, and man to pig, but it's increasingly difficult to say which is which.

Over the weekend of August 11-12, the disparate elements of the US far-right assembled in Charlottesville, Virginia, supposedly to protest the removal of a statue of Confederate general Robert E. Lee.

On the Friday night, fascists marched with torches to the statue chanting "Jews will not replace us". Local students linked arms around the statue and were attacked and beaten by the fascists.

On Saturday, the far-right were countered by a mass mobilisation containing both militant and less militant elements. While the fascists were successfully prevented from assembling in the park, one member of neo-Nazi group Vanguard America drove his car into a crowd of counter-protesters, killing IWW organiser Heather Heyer.

In the aftermath, Donald Trump condemned "the alt-left" - meaning antifascists - for stirring up trouble. Despite initial ridicule, this narrative was also taken up by the liberal press.

The Guardian, New York Times, Washington Post and New Yorker all took turns to denounce "antifa" for discrediting anti-racist movements and the wider anti-Trump left.

These criticisms intensified when, a week later, there were isolated scuffles in Berkeley, California, when a massive antifascist mobilisation shut down a pro-Trump rally.

This attempt to divide militant



antifascists from the wider movement against white supremacy was unsuccessful though. Several faith and civil rights activists who had attempted to non-violently block access to Emancipation Park in Charlottesville publicly expressed their support for "antifa".

They pointed out that the police had disengaged and let fascists attack local churches and synagogues and only militant tactics had kept them contained.

Civil rights activist Cornel West said that anarchists saved his life. Pastor Rev Seth Wispelwey echoed his

comments saying they would have been "beaten to a bloody pulp" otherwise. He continued:

"They have their tools to achieve their purposes, and they are not ones I will personally use, but let me stress that our purposes were the same: block this violent tide and do not let it take the pedestal."

In doing so, they demonstrated that a broad, self-organised working-class movement, diverse in tactics and political cultures can resist both fascism, and the co-option of anti-racist struggle by political parties.

REBEL CITIES



Long before Occupy movement, cities were the subject of much utopian thinking. They were the centres of capital accumulation as well as of revolutionary politics, where deeper currents of social and political change rise to the surface. Do the bankers and developers control urban resources or do the people? Who dictates the quality and organisation of our lives?

Cities are changing rapidly – the urban labour market is increasingly internationalized and precarious while traditional social and municipal land has undergone mass privatisation.

Labour automation – a process which started in factories – is now being rapidly extended to other sectors, such as finance, retail and transportation.

To achieve this capitalists require social as well as economic control of cities. This is being enabled by new technologies that allow companies to store enormous quantities of information on every one of us.

WHO WE ARE // In 1991, Haringey Solidarity Group (HSG) emerged from the Anti-Poll Tax campaign. We wanted to create a long-term, vibrant, non-hierarchical group, unlike political parties where ambitions and posturing displace real politics.

We believe in ridding ourselves of the current system which places profit and power before people's needs. This involves getting organised, fighting back and collectively taking those decisions which affect our daily lives.

Objects we use every day such as mobile phones, bank cards and oyster cards, are powerful instruments of control. In cities we are also spied on hundreds of times a day by CCTV cameras.

Furthermore, urban redevelopment is one of the biggest interests of capitalism in the 21st century with programmes of social cleansing, gentrification and regeneration happening in most urban areas. This is combined with mass sell-offs of social housing, destruction of social services and benefits, and systematic undermining of working conditions – to create a precarious workforce forced to accept minimum wage or below.

Cities are being taken over by the global super-rich; developments of multi-million pound flats threaten our green spaces, and skyrocketing rents, housing insecurity and displacement erode social communities and our collective solidarity.

We think people should take control of their community and workplace struggles, support each other, encourage practical solidarity, build the necessary skills and knowledge for these struggles and generate strong, permanent, grassroots networks.

Many of us are involved with local residents', community and campaign groups within the borough. We support workers in dispute, campaigns against public service cuts and threatened community amenities. We are active on environmental,

But cities have also been the stage for an astonishing array of class-struggles. There are too many examples to mention but we have seen the Paris Commune in 1871, as well as later events such as Kronstadt and the Petrograd Soviet, and the role of Barcelona in the Spanish Civil War. More recently we have seen mass protests in Tahrir Square in Cairo, as well as across Southern Europe.

On the other hand, the struggle for liveable and meaningful communities and a drift towards local autonomy, have, in recent decades, triggered new urban protest movements that have envisioned an alternative city. Squatter communities in Germany, Holland and Denmark; neighbourhood associations in Spain and growing urban mobilization in cities of newly industrialized countries such as Caracas, Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo have brought into being a mode of living distinct from the logics of capitalism.

This history shows that on many occasions the spirit of protest and revolt has spread contagiously through urban networks in remarkable ways. There are multiple diverse urban struggles and social movements already in existence.

We need to support grassroots movements and self-organisation that creates humane public spaces, that improves our cities' environmental sustainability and that constructs social spaces and communities that can readily incorporate new immigrants.

We must proclaim our right to the city, our right to change the world, and to reinvent the city so that it meets our needs, desires and dreams.

housing and claimants' issues and resist state controls.

Come and share your views at our monthly meeting. We welcome your involvement and with practical activities including distributing this newsletter and producing other materials including posters and leaflets.

For more about HSG, visit haringey.org.uk, befriend us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter @hsg, contact PO Box 2474, London N8; 0845 2235270; or info@haringey.org.uk